



## THE BANDA ACEH TO MEULABOH ROAD PROJECT: April 2006 Status Report



*The tsunami changed the landscape forever*

The December 26, 2004 tsunami changed the West Coast of North Sumatra forever, creating intense challenges to rebuild the coastal road. Even maintenance of target areas has proven difficult, affected by excessive sea erosion, high tide and rain flooding.

Approximately 240 km with more than 110 crossings, the Banda Aceh to Meulaboh road is the economic backbone of the region, connecting Aceh Province with the rest of North Sumatra and Indonesia. New sections of road must be completed to realign and/or replace the existing road, no longer useable due to extensive tsunami damage and land mass alterations.

Recognizing the importance of this critical road, the U.S. Government is supporting reconstruction of the two-lane road from Banda Aceh to Meulaboh. The project will be done in two major phases: 1) rehabilitation of the existing road and bridges along the 80 km corridor between Banda Aceh and Lamno, including 8 km of new road sections; and 2) design and construction of the remaining 232 km of new road to Meulaboh.

**First phase:** In August 2005, USAID awarded a contract to a local construction company, which has re-opened 80 kilometers of road and reduced travel time to Lamno by half. This company continues to maintain this stretch of road, employing local Acehnese from the surviving communities, including former GAM combatants.

**Second phase:** In October 2005, USAID awarded a contract to a U.S. firm for design and supervision of the road. Progress to date includes completion of environmental assessments following both U.S. and Indonesian laws, community consultations, aerial and ground surveys, preliminary design for the roadway and bridges, and working with the Government of Indonesia to secure land titles for right-of-way. These complex activities are challenged by changing land conditions, historical information lost during the tsunami, cost escalations beyond normal range, and gradual transition of provincial governance from military to civilian.



*The Challenge Ahead*

Firms will be invited to bid on construction activities on the 232 km of new road to Meulaboh in the summer of 2006. The entire Banda Aceh to Meulaboh Road Project is expected to be complete by the summer of 2009.